

## Rothman Gets Transportation Secretary Mineta To Call For Homeland Security Review Of Indigo Airlines

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Rothman Gets Transportation Secretary Mineta To Call For Homeland Security Review Of Indigo Airlines, Teterboro Airport Operations

Cabinet Secretary Joins Congressman's Call For Investigation Into Security Concerns Over Indigo's Scheduled Teterboro Service That Threatens The Nature Of Airport

Washington, DC – Following numerous discussions with top Bush Administration officials regarding his efforts to shut down Indigo Airlines, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ9) has gotten Transportation Secretary Norm Mineta to call on the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to review Indigo's operations at Teterboro Airport because the airline poses potential security risks and also threatens to change the nature of the general aviation airport. Mineta, who sent a letter late yesterday to TSA Administrator, Admiral James Loy, testified today before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation and Treasury. Rothman, who is a member of the panel, questioned the Cabinet Secretary further over Indigo Airlines' a so-called charter service that in actuality offers scheduled service between Chicago Midway Airport and Teterboro Airport.

"Secretary Mineta called for the Transportation Security Administration to review Indigo Airlines because of the security risks it poses and because it threatens to push out the smaller, locally owned private aircraft in favor of larger commercial jets from across the country. This is a clear indication that the Administration is finally starting to recognize that Indigo's operations at Teterboro must be shut down," Rothman said. "I am hopeful that the TSA will be responsive to Secretary Mineta's concerns over Indigo's operations at Teterboro and the threat it poses to the New York Metropolitan area. Indigo's operations at Teterboro must be shut down before it is too late. We don't want an Indigo aircraft used in a terrorist attack and we don't want commercial jumbo jets taking off and landing every other minute."

In his letter to TSA's Admiral Loy, Mineta wrote that, "During the Department of Transportation's review of this matter [Indigo's operations at Teterboro], we have become concerned that there may be security issues that require further scrutiny. In light of Indigo's regular jet aircraft operations, which in some ways resemble those of a scheduled carrier, and the proximity of Teterboro to Manhattan, we believe that a security review of the situation may be warranted. If other carriers imitate Indigo the nature of operations at that airport could change substantially."

In responding to Rothman's questions, Mineta seemed well-versed in the nature of Indigo's operations and to Congressman's concerns. Mineta even went so far as to confirm with Rothman, as the Congressman has been saying, that the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PA) would allow and has been trying encourage Indigo to use Newark Airport's General Aviation terminal as a better regional choice than Teterboro. Rothman and Mineta had a private, face-to-face meeting prior to the hearing in which the Transportation Secretary indicated to him that Indigo's operations tipped the balance of the security equation for the New York Metropolitan area and that it convinced him of the need to write the letter to Admiral Loy.

“Obviously, Secretary Mineta has concerns about Indigo’s operations at Teterboro, and the precedent it sets for copycat airline operations from across America flying into Teterboro, as upsetting the security balance in the region,” Rothman said. “I am hopeful that Secretary Mineta’s efforts and the review by Admiral Loy will result in the transfer of Indigo’s operations from Teterboro Airport to Newark Airport, where that kind of airline operation is more safely and appropriately provided for.”

Mineta’s letter to Admiral Loy comes less than a week after Rothman got Congressman James Oberstar (D-MN8), who is the senior Democratic Congressman on the 75 member House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure that develops the nation’s aviation laws, to write to the Transportation Secretary regarding Rothman’s concern over Indigo’s operations at Teterboro Airport. In his letter to Mineta, Oberstar wrote that, “My concern about this service is that although Indigo/Airserv (Indigo’s sister company) claims to be an on-demand charter service, it advertises four daily round trips between Midway and Teterboro on a specific schedule. While I realize that this may indeed be permissible under the Department’s current public charter rules, I am troubled by the fact that Indigo/AirServ can legally hold out a schedule to the public like a regular airline, but it need not operate under the more demanding [safety] regulations.”

Rothman said that the need to resolve the Indigo at Teterboro issues must be dealt with immediately, especially after the Department of Homeland Security issued a warning last week about terrorists’ fixation on using small planes in attacks. The warning came after U.S. officials uncovered an al Qaeda plot to crash a small aircraft loaded with explosives into the United States Consulate in Karachi, Pakistan. The warning states that, “General aviation aircraft that were loaded with explosives to enhance their destructive potential would make them the equivalent of a medium-sized truck bomb. Al-Qaeda may attempt to use charter or general aviation aircraft to conduct future attacks because of their availability, less stringent protective measures, and destructive potential. The group has a fair sized pilot cadre and the use of small aircraft requires far less skill and training than some larger aircraft.”

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